



NATIONAL MOTORISTS ASSOCIATION

Empowering Drivers Since 1982

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Testimony for the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee On House Bills 5962 through 5966, December 3, 2014

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, the National Motorists Association (NMA) very strongly supports all five of these bills in their original form. We have a chance to give Michigan the world's most advanced speed limit laws, not just the best in the USA, but in the world. Michigan could lead on this issue with the best laws.

For more than 70 years traffic safety engineers have known that setting speed limits at the 85th percentile speeds of free flowing traffic under good conditions almost always produces the smoothest and safest traffic flows, with the fewest crashes, and the most efficient throughput capacities. These bills will require setting the safest and most efficient speed limits in every part of the state, both rural and urban.

The stair step default limits from 80 mph on many rural freeways down to 15 mph in mobile home parks are just right. And these default limits can be modified with traffic and engineering studies using standard and accepted engineering principles for the exceptions where the default limits might not be appropriate. The bills note the correct use of warning signs and advisory speeds for short segments where design speeds are below the 85th percentile speeds. They even take account of the desire for lower default limits on the more populated gravel roads found in Oakland and Wayne counties.

Please note Texas, Utah, Wyoming and Idaho have all raised some rural freeways to 80 mph with little or no change in the 85th percentile speeds and no negative safety issues. Montana and Nevada are likely to follow shortly. Much of Europe uses freeway limits of 130 kph or 81 mph. Michigan raised most urban freeway limits to 70 with excellent results. I have driven in 24 world countries experiencing realistic speed limits that work and unrealistic ones that don't.

As the experts know, there are two things these bills will not do. First, they will not increase the actual and safe 85th percentile speeds by any amount negative for safety. We may see increases in 85th percentile speeds of one to three mph, but some 85th percentile speeds will likely go down as well. Second, they will not make our urban or rural streets and highways less safe; they will rather do the opposite to improve safety and traffic flows overall.

One thing the bills will do that every Michigan driver should appreciate is to make speed traps with under posted limits impossible to maintain. The only real reasons anyone could object to these bills is either to protect speed trap revenue or to not have to explain to the public why the limits in so many areas have been set so incorrectly for so many years under the false pretenses that artificially low limits are safer. They aren't. Another benefit will be to help restore respect for traffic laws and officers that enforce them, because officers will no longer be manning the hated speed traps for revenue.

Hopefully, we will soon see some significant increases in road funding statewide, but this should not be a blank check. Taxpayers should insist on quality performance for their money including the correct safety engineering standards for our posted speed limits that are found in these bills.

Thank you and I would be happy to take any questions.

Respectfully submitted,

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